

Article 7 authorizes such city public schools and other offices as the Government shall designate, to take meteorological observations which are to be reported every 10 days to the National Astronomical Observatory, and directs that the Government provide the necessary recording instruments.

This article also extends the franking privilege, both postal and telegraphic, to those engaged in this work.

Article 8 authorizes the Government to designate as many as 20 persons or bodies in different sections of the country to make meteorological observations and allows such observers annual pay to the amount of 120 pesos (gold) each.

The Director of the National Astronomical Observatory is also authorized to establish not to exceed four (4) special meteorological stations whose programs shall be of the same order as that of the central office, to be located at selected points, and the official in charge of such a station to receive annual pay of 600 pesos (gold). For the expenses of these special stations 4,800 pesos (gold), or so much thereof as may be needed, is appropriated.

Article 9 provides that the central office shall distribute all the instruments employed, and that they shall be strictly uniform in pattern, the fluviometers to be uniform with those employed by the navigation companies.

Article 10 extends franking privileges to the employees of the service, the Director of the National Astronomical Observatory, and to persons or bodies designated to make meteorological observations.

Article 11 provides that appointments to the meteorological service will be made by the Government, with the concurrence of the Director of the National Astronomical Observatory.

ANOTHER "DARK DAY OF MAY 19, 1780"?

The editor has recently received the letter printed below, but is unable to find any reports indicating that the darkness of May 19, 1780, which visited New England (Cambridge, Mass.) between 10 and 11 a. m. on that date and continued into the night, was observed outside that province.¹ Accounts prepared at the time indicated that the darkness was due to forest fires—ashes and cinders to

a depth of 6 inches fell in parts of New Hampshire—and that it did not extend in any direction far beyond the boundaries of New England. This view is also adopted by F. G. Plummer in his study of forest fires, where he gives a map of the extent of historic "dark days" in the northeastern United States and lists them.²

We publish Mr. Maxwell Hall's letter in the hope that some reader may be able to increase our knowledge of the extent of the darkness of May 19, 1780, and help to determine whether or no there was an independent area of darkness over the West Indies region.

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA, W. I.,

January 19, 1917.

DEAR SIR: There have been some letters in the local press here about the dark day, May 19, 1780, recorded in the Connecticut Historical Collections; and one of the writers referred the matter to Prof. H. F. Newall, of Cambridge, England.

Prof. Newall's letter in reply has been published, and it is to the effect that "there is no evidence that on 19 May, 1780, there was any change in the sun's light. The evidence quoted only shows that there were local conditions of unusual nature in Connecticut, such as might be produced by smoke from forest fires at a distance, with easily imagined conditions of wind."

And so indeed I had always supposed myself; but on February 12, 1915, there died in Montego Bay an old Negro woman at the great age of 142 years; and the local newspaper reported that she was a child at the time of "the dark day," May 19, 1780, but had a distinct recollection of it. I then made further inquiry but got no further information, nor was it likely that I should, beyond the fact that the circumstance referred to Jamaica.

Prof. Humphreys made a study of the darkening of sunlight through volcanic eruptions (Bull. Mount Weather Obs'y, v. 6, p. 26), but his list makes no reference to the year 1780.

* * *
Yours, truly,

MAXWELL HALL,
Government Meteorologist.

Is it not more probable that, even accepting the stated age of the old negress as reliable, she remembered some "dark day" due to some local forest fire in Jamaica?

The character of the year 1780, aside from the forest fires of North America, was probably very dry and very warm. In fact, as far as Humphreys' compilation goes, the general average temperatures were higher than they have been since. This may be interpreted as showing a general clearness of the atmosphere during 1780, which would be rather inconsistent with the presence of a general dust veil or extensive smoke cloud.—C. A. jr.

¹ Williams, Samuel. An account of a very uncommon darkness in the States of New England, May 19, 1780. Memoirs, Amer. acad. arts and sci., Boston, 1785, I: 234-246.
² Ferley, Sidney. Historic storms of New England, etc. Salem, Mass., 1801. 8°. See Chapter 23, pp. 105-114.

² Plummer, Fred G. Forest fires, their causes, extent, and effects, with a summary etc. Washington, 1912. 8°. (U. S. Forest Service Bulletin 117). Cf. pp. 13 and 19.